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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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Housekeepers' Chat Wednesday, January 29, 1930.

Not for Publication

Subject: "What Is Malnutrition?" Program approved by Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor. Menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: Bureau Publication No. 59: "What Is Malnutrition?"

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The other day I heard a splendid lecture on the subject of "Malnutrition." I wish that every mother in the United States could have heard this lecture.

Do you know that malnutrition is widespread in this country? In some communities it is so common that it is scarcely recognized as an abnormal condition.

Before I go further, perhaps I should explain what is meant by malnutrition. Is it an infectious disease, like measles or whooping cough, which runs its course and then is over? Unfortunately, not. Otherwise steps would have been taken long ago, to control it. Is it a disease like rheumatism, which causes sufficient pain to demand attention and treatment? In fact, it is not a disease at all, but "a low condition of health and body substance."

To make the definition more clear, let's describe two children, one healthy and well-nourished, and the other suffering from malnutrition.

The healthy, well-nourished child has good color, bright eyes--without blue circles or dark hollows under them--and smooth, glossy hair. His posture is good, his step elastic, his flesh firm, and his muscles well developed. He is usually happy and good-natured, and he is full of life and animal spirits. His sleep is sound, his appetite and digestion are good, and his bowels are regular. He is, in short, what nature meant him to be before anything else--a happy, healthy young animal.

The picture of the other child, the child suffering from malnutrition, is not a pleasing one. The poorly nourished child is usually thin, but he may be fat and flabby. His skin may have a pale, delicate, waxlike look, or it may be sallow, muddy, or even pasty or earthy. Usually, blue circles or dark hollows are under his eyes. His hair may be rough, like that of a poorly cared for farm animal, his tongue coated, and his bowels constipated.

His shoulders are usually rounded, the shoulder blades sometimes standing out to such an extent as to produce the deformity known as "wings."

His chest is flat and narrow; his abdomen protrudes. His teeth may be decayed, and he may have enlarged or diseased tonsils and adenoids.

The under-nourished child may be listless at play and work, not caring to romp and play like other children; he is likely to tire easily; and he may be regarded as lazy. Malnutrition may be the cause of his failing in school work, for the under-nourished child is likely to lack mental vigor, to have little power of concentration and attention. He may be nervous, restless, and fidgety; and he will probably sleep lightly and be finicky about his food.

Such, then, are some of the signs which distinguish an under-nourished child from a well-nourished one. Malnutrition exists in all degrees--from severe cases, in which the signs are unmistakeable, to cases in which it's hard to tell what is wrong with the child.

Now that we have listed the signs of malnutrition, let's go further into the subject. What causes malnutrition? Why are so many children in a low condition of health? Shall we outline the specific causes of malnutrition?

First, improper diet. Improper diet is generally conceded to be the most common cause of malnutrition. Growing children need generous amounts of food. If a child eats an insufficient breakfast, such as bread and coffee, he is practically sure to eat too little total food for that day, even though he may eat a good dinner and a good supper. If he indulges in sweets, and highly seasoned foods, or eats between meals, or keeps late hours, or sleeps in a poorly ventilated room, or gets too little exercise, he will have a finicky appetite, and this will result in his eating too little food.

Besides having enough food, a child must have the right kind of food. Remember what I told you Monday, about the white rats which didn't get enough milk and leafy vegetables? I won't go into this subject again today--but don't forget about the importance of milk and leafy vegetables, along with meat and eggs and fruit, and all the other foods which are good for children.

Another cause of malnutrition is wrong food habits. The child's digestive tract is not fully grown, and should not be expected to deal with all foods suitable for a grown-up. To avoid taxing the child's digestive system, see that he has simple, well-cooked, easily digested foods. Keep out of his diet rich, highly seasoned, indigestible foods, and see that he eats regularly, and takes plenty of time to eat.

A third cause of malnutrition is insufficient sleep. Continued loss of sleep is a serious cause of malnutrition and general ill health in many children.

A fourth cause is chronic fatigue, brought about by too strenuous or too long-continued physical activity in work, in play, or in school athletics, combined with too little sleep. Sometimes this is the chief cause of malnutrition.

A fifth cause is lack of exercise--too little outdoor play, which results in too little fresh air, exercise, and sunshine.

A sixth cause is diseases and defects--enlarged or diseased tonsils or adenoids, decayed teeth, and tuberculosis. When these physical defects are present, they become even more important causes of malnutrition than improper feeding or sleeping habits. Even if a child eats plenty of wholesome food, he cannot gain weight, nor even hold his own, if his body is being torn down as fast as it can be built up. Complete physical examinations will bring to light diseases and defects which are keeping a child in ill health.

Before I broadcast the menu, I should like to tell you mothers listening-in that there are some very good leaflets, in the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor, which deal with the subject of malnutrition in children. If you are interested, write to me, and I'll see that you get the information you want.

Now let's leave our child health clinic, and see what an appetizing dinner the Menu Specialist has prepared for our children. Scalloped Oysters--that sounds good. They might be cooked in individual ramekins, or in the big scallop shells the children brought home from the beach last summer. Besides Scalloped Oysters, we'll have Five-Minute Cabbage and Pickled Beets, and Jellied Fruit, with Cream.

Want a recipe for Scalloped Oysters? Here it is, all ready to be written. Six ingredients, for Scalloped Oysters:

1-1/2 quarts oysters	Salt
3 cups dry bread crumbs	Pepper, and
1/4 cup melted butter or other fat-	Milk.

Six ingredients, for Scalloped Oysters: (Repeat).

Drain the oysters from their liquor, and pick out any pieces of shell. Mix the crumbs and melted fat, spread a thin layer of the crumbs in the bottom of a greased baking dish, cover with oysters, season with salt and pepper, add another layer of crumbs, and continue until all the oysters are used. Pour on the oyster liquor and, if needed, milk to moisten thoroughly. Cover the top with the remaining crumbs, bake in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) for 25 to 30 minutes, and serve from the dish. If scalloped oysters are cooked in ramekins or large scallop shells, they will be done in 15 to 20 minutes.

To repeat the menu: Scalloped Oysters; Five-Minute Cabbage; Pickled Beets; Jellied Fruit with Cream. There's a recipe for the Five-Minute Cabbage in the Radio Cookbook, on page 15--shredded cabbage cooked for two minutes in hot milk. Then add a cup of cream or rich milk, blended butter and flour, and seasoning, and cook rapidly for 3 or 4 minutes longer. The result is a crisp vegetable, delicate in flavor and color.

Thursday: "Beauty in the Home."